

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 002036

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS, S/CT, EUR/NB  
DEPARTMENT ALSO PLEASE PASS TOPEC  
NSC FOR E. MILLARD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11-25-13

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#) [NO](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: Acting chief of monitors says ceasefire being observed; Navy chief defends aggressive posture

Refs: (A) Colombo 2010  
- (B) Colombo 1845

(U) Classified by Ambassador Jeffrey J. Lunstead.  
Reasons 1.5 (b, d).

[11.](#) (C) SUMMARY: The Ambassador met November 24 with Hagrup Haukland, the acting head of the Norwegian-run Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), and separately with Sri Lankan Navy Chief Vice Admiral Daya Sandagiri. Haukland said the GSL and the Tigers continued to observe the ceasefire accord. The SLMM remained concerned about the possibility of Tamil-Muslim violence in the east, however. Haukland indicated that Norway might make a determination soon regarding the fate of chief monitor Tellefsen, whose removal President Kumaratunga had demanded in October. Despite the tensions in the south and other uncertainties, it is positive that the SLMM finds itself able to continue its important work. Admiral Sandagiri agreed that it was important to support the peace process, but showed a more belligerent attitude towards the Tigers. END SUMMARY.

[12.](#) (C) MEETING WITH SLMM: Ambassador Lunstead met November 24 with Hagrup Haukland, the acting head of the SLMM. Haukland, a retired Norwegian military officer, told the Ambassador that both the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) continued to observe the February 2002 ceasefire accord. Regarding the LTTE's unauthorized camp located at Wan Ela near Trincomalee city in the east, Haukland noted that the LTTE had made no move to dismantle the camp in spite of the SLMM's earlier ruling that its construction violated the ceasefire agreement. The Ambassador queried Haukland as to why the Tigers were adamant in their refusal to dismantle the camp. Haukland replied that it was a "matter of principle" for the Tigers, as the camp was not particularly strategic and "could probably be disassembled in a couple of days."

[13.](#) (C) In addition to the Wan Ela camp, Haukland noted that the Tigers occupied seven "pockets" in the east and one in the north in the Mannar District area. He said the existence of such pockets could be "explosive" should the GSL challenge LTTE occupation of the areas in question. Haukland added that one of the most crucial missions the SLMM had was defusing Tamil-Muslim ethnic tension in the east. The situation there was poor and LTTE-Muslim violence was possible. Along these lines, Haukland briefly mentioned a November 23 incident in Kinniya, near the Wan Ela camp, in which two Muslims had been killed.

[14.](#) (C) The Ambassador related that, during his meeting with President Kumaratunga following her November 4 takeover of three ministries and suspension of Parliament, he had stressed the importance of the GSL's and the LTTE's continued adherence to the ceasefire agreement. The Ambassador added that he had also underlined to the President the vital importance of the SLMM's role.

[15.](#) (C) NORWAY TO DECIDE ON CHIEF MONITOR: Noting the difficulties inherent in the SLMM's work, Haukland underscored the continued importance of monitoring the situation at sea. He stated that the SLMM's monitoring effort at sea continued much as it had previously despite the October 16 incident which had led to the President's calling for the removal of chief monitor Tryggve Tellefsen. (Note: In the incident referred to, a SLMM official contacted the LTTE to ask about a report about a possible Tiger resupply ship. In doing this, the SLMM was accused of inappropriately tipping the LTTE off to Sri Lanka Navy scrutiny of the reported vessel. Citing such concerns, President Kumaratunga demanded that Tellefsen be replaced -- see Ref B.) Responding to the Ambassador's query as to Tellefsen's status, Haukland replied that Tellefsen remained in Norway for "consultations" and the Norwegian government could make a decision as early as this week whether or not to

retain him as chief of mission. Haukland noted, however, that he "couldn't see how Tellefsen could come back" with President Kumaratunga acting as head of the Defense Ministry. The Ambassador commented that considering the nature of the SLMM's mission, it was difficult to deal with political pressure of this type. Haukland concurred, remarking that if the SLMM were seen as susceptible to political pressure, then its mission would be compromised.

16. (C) MEETING WITH NAVY CHIEF: In an office call later the same day with the Navy Commander, Vice Admiral Daya Sandagiri, the Ambassador reiterated the message that he has given each of the service commanders -- U.S. appreciation of the responsibility and restraint shown by the armed forces throughout the peace process. Admiral Sandagiri was the most outspoken of the three Commanders in asserting the rights and duties of the military to defend the "sovereignty of the nation." The LTTE, he said, is not a legitimate organization and should not be allowed to import items into Sri Lanka. It became clear throughout the session that while he publicly supported the peace process, he would not be deterred by the confines of the MOU in preventing the LTTE from importing dangerous materials into the country. "Why else does the Navy exist?" he asked.

17. (C) Ambassador noted the difficulty and ambiguity of the Navy's task. The Navy wanted to support the peace process and observe the ceasefire, but at the same time wanted to protect Sri Lanka's waters and prevent the LTTE from smuggling in weapons. These two objectives could conflict with each other. Discussing the Navy's recent imbroglio with the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, Sandagiri said that in future the SLMM will not be informed of a suspected LTTE vessel until confirmation is made of its location and identification. He admitted that in some cases getting an SLMM representative to the site of an incident could take up to a day, but argued that the alternative, giving up secrecy and surprise to the LTTE by allowing SLMM observers on board earlier, was unacceptable.

18. (C) During the discussion, the Admiral revealed that he believes the war could have been won in 2001 if the government had not established the peace process. He described an LTTE that was "nearly beaten," hampered by the Army's attacks against its leadership and running out of resources. With the peace process, Sandagiri lamented, the LTTE has been able to build itself geographically, politically, socially, economically, and militarily. Ambassador reiterated the US belief that neither side would have been likely to win, and that negotiation, not fighting, was the path to ending the long-term conflict.

19. (C) COMMENT: The SLMM's role as chief monitor of the ceasefire has been, and will continue to be, a key component in the success of the peace process. The good news is that Haukland seemed upbeat and confident in his group's ability to carry out its mission. Given the uncertainties involving the political situation in the south and over Tellefsen's continued leadership of the group, as well as Norway's recent decision to place "on hold" its facilitation effort, it is certainly positive that the SLMM finds itself able to continue its important work. On the other side, Admiral Sandagiri seems almost to be spoiling for a fight. The new procedure, where SLMM monitors will not be taken aboard while the SLN searches for suspected Tiger vessels, but only brought out after a vessel is located, is fraught with danger. It could take up to a full day for a monitor to reach the scene. It is hard to believe that a Sri Lankan Navy vessel and an LTTE gunrunner will sit calmly and observe each other for that length of time. END COMMENT.

10. (U) Minimize considered.

LUNSTEAD